

Interview Transcript

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Interviewee: Sister Anne McMullen

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Transcribed By: Nancy Steinmann

[00:00:00.00] [Director's comments]

[00:00:18.05] INTERVIEWER: This is the CSJ Oral History Project for Mount Saint Mary's University, on Tuesday, September 19, at Carondelet Center--2017. Shannon Green interviewing Sister Anne McMullen.

[00:00:35.02] INTERVIEWER: So Sister Anne, would you start off by telling us your full name and your age?

[00:00:39.20] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: My name is Sister Anne McMullen, and I'm eighty-two years old.

[00:00:43.07] INTERVIEWER: And would you tell us where you were born and a little bit about your family and childhood?

[00:00:49.04] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: I was born in Brooklyn, New York, and I have--I had one brother, who was a priest, and I had three--two other sisters. And my parents were both Irish immigrants from Northern Ireland, and with their own struggle for faith in Ireland I think they gave me a different picture of "church" than I experienced with a lot of my friends--because our church was very people-oriented, no fear of God, very much reaching out to people, and it was what they carried from Ireland to the U. S.

[00:01:28.08] INTERVIEWER: Did they meet in Ireland and marry in Ireland?

[00:01:31.01] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: No, they didn't. They met in Brooklyn, New York [laughs]. My father was a part of--at eighteen years old he was part of the Irish Republican Army trying to free Ireland from England, and he and two other youth had bombed an English arsenal, and were recognized, and they had to be snuck out of the country. So he was in Brooklyn, and my mother was on her way through Brooklyn to California, and met my dad and stayed and married. [laughs]. So that's where they met.

[00:02:03.29] INTERVIEWER: So you grew up in Brooklyn.

[00:02:06.05] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Brooklyn, until high school, right. In high school I came to San Francisco [California].

[00:02:11.20] INTERVIEWER: Let's talk a little bit more about your upbringing. It sounds like--what an influence your father's experience in particular--but your parents experience had on how they formed you.

[00:02:18.25] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Yes. I think--I didn't realize how much my father influenced me until I went to Ireland with my mother, because he was a disgrace to his family and they never acknowledged him after that. And it was after his death--my brother had gone to Ireland leading a group and found out about my dad and what he had done. And so we went. But what my father had become was very much a peace-giver, and so we were never ever scolded--just if my father looked at me, I was feel he was disappointed, and change. And that's the way all of us did. It was an interesting thing. Nor did he ever raise his voice, nor did he ever speak against anyone. I think the whole experience must have changed him. So it was a--and my mother was very much a --reach out to people. And so we always had someone else staying with us. And we were always losing our dolls or anything that was our favorite toy to someone [laughs]. But that was just their way of being.

[00:03:33.16] INTERVIEWER: And it sounds like you make a connection between that and the way that they

raised you in terms of your Catholic faith.

[00:03:39.17] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Definitely--very definitely--because--.

[00:03:40.25] INTERVIEWER: Could you say more about that?

[00:03:41.27] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Yes. Well in school--and really even in early religious life--so many people had this image of God as a punisher or someone to be feared, and we were never raised with that. God was just a very loving person. And the same strictness with faith was never part of our lives. I can remember--[laughs]--it's a terrible story--of my mother saying to me--I had gone to school and we were supposed to paint the windows with snow or whatever for Christmas. And I came home and wanted to do that. And I said, "Sister said we were supposed to do it." And my mother said, "Tell Sister she's full of baloney." So of course, I went and told Sister she was full of baloney and my mother had to apologize [smiles]. But it was like--we did--we respected but didn't have that kind of great awe--they were people to us. And that was the way my faith was--it was very much people and--. But yeah, we were religious. We said the Rosary every night. I can still picture my dad kneeling down saying his prayers. It's--you know, before he went to bed. It's just a kind of a normal thing, but it was normal, it wasn't this big strict thing.

[00:05:00.18] INTERVIEWER: Any reflections on having immigrant parents and living in Brooklyn at that time?

[00:05:06.14] INTERVIEWER: Yes. Very definitely. And I think a lot of immigrants I see start the same way. When I was real little I can remember we lived by an Irish ghetto, I would call it. The whole place was, you know, Irish or Italian or German or whatever. And we were in the Irish ghetto. And I can remember my mother would say when I'd come home from school, "What's your friend's last name?" [laughs]. And then, she started to change--that--the first change was the church pulled out all the side pews. And when I questioned it I found out that they pulled them out because there were too many black people--there were African-Americans moving into the area, and they had their own church. So with that my mother changed me out of having--going to processions or anything at that church--that I became part of the African-American church for all of those kinds of things. And then we moved, and where we moved there weren't any Irish, except us. And so--it was a mix of Jewish and German and Italian. And so my mother dropped that whole kind of prejudice or that beginning security of, "What's their last name?"--to this very much relating to people. But the immigrant thing stuck, because even--my mother had to open a restaurant after my dad died to raise us, and people would come into the restaurant and ask us, you know, "Where are you from?" And when they would hear North Ireland, "Oh you're an Orangeman." And if they were from the South [of Ireland] they'd just cut her. And even in community that happened when--the first time she came to us, a superior walked away when she found out. It was--so the immigrant thing is a part today of--Central Americans stay with Central Americans, Mexicans stay with--it's still a part but it's a security piece I think, and it's something that's lasted and looked down upon by others.

[00:07:13.01] INTERVIEWER: Did you lose your father at a young age?

[00:07:16.00] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Well no, I had entered the community, but the rest of the family--I was the oldest, and so yes they did. So she had to raise them.

[00:07:24.03] INTERVIEWER: And so then you moved to--tell us how you got to California? You moved to San Francisco?

[00:07:27.25] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Okay. So my father came first. I had an uncle who had several grocery stores in San Francisco, and he was on his way to Ireland and stopped in New York and asked my dad, wouldn't he come work for him, and would he come out. Because my dad had had a store, but he had lost it during the Depression [1930s] because he gave everything away. And so my dad had said, "Yes". And so he--so then my uncle said to my mother, "Are you going to come because he's coming?" And she said, "Of course I go everywhere my husband goes." So that's how we moved out. And so we came in my freshman--and my mother wouldn't go unless my dad could come first and get us all into a Catholic school, which he did. [all laugh].

[00:08:19.12] INTERVIEWER: What part of San Francisco did you live in?

[00:08:22.03] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Haight-Ashbury. [Nods.] Yes. So that's where my high school upbringing was for sure.

[00:08:28.02] INTERVIEWER: And did you--how was the move for you as a teenager?

[00:08:31.07] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Well it was hard leaving all my friends. And also--New Yorkers dressed very much stricter, and you know we had long stockings and all this. And so I'd be made fun of by the kids in school at first for how I dressed, but that changed rapidly. [laughs].

[00:08:53.13] INTERVIEWER: So what high school did you go to?

[00:08:55.20] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: I went to Star of the Sea High School, which is Carondelet.

[00:09:00.17] INTERVIEWER: So let's talk about that then. Is that the first place you met the Sisters?

[00:09:05.14] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: In my first five years I had Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood, and then the next years I had another order. And so when I came out here it was familiar--they were Sisters of St. Joseph, and a lot of the spirit was the same.

[00:09:20.02] INTERVIEWER: When did you start thinking about entering religious life--how old were you?

[00:09:24.20] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: I think I played it when I was little. I can remember me and my girlfriend playing we were Sisters and teaching. But I--you know, I think that was a part of it. And then that left, but the second high school--the second school I went to the Sisters were very strict and very different from that first group and I certainly never thought of it. And then in high school it was always prodding me but never really wanting to do it, or really sure of it. And I did a lot of service activities in high school, working with different kinds of groups. And I also was very close to someone. And I knew--that still didn't satisfy. It wasn't--I didn't want to be tied down. It sounds terrible. But I wasn't sure that's what--that I wanted religious life. But I had gotten in trouble when I was in high school and when the person--the Sister said something about--you'd never be able--"You'll never be able to enter" or whatever, that got me the other--"I will then!" [laughs]. It was the opposite. And so when I did enter it was just to verify was that what I was longing for. And it was. Yeah.

[00:10:40.10] INTERVIEWER: When you talk about knowing the Sisters of Brentwood and the same spirit, can you say more about what that spirit was?

[00:10:45.27] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: The spirit was--and I can only do it in comparison to the other groups because I did volunteer work with another order in New York a little bit, and then I did it through high school--and then I had this other order for the rest of elementary school--that the spirit that was different was the friendliness, and the equality--that I never felt teacher was "over" or Sister was "over". They always treated us as equals. And I think that's part of that ability to walk in someone else's shoes, or the relational piece, and that was very strong. And the other piece was I always saw them as happy. And I never saw one contradicting another, or demeaning of students even--that--none of that ever happened. And so that was a piece. And later when I taught with another order I saw that was definitely a piece of the way I was compared to how this other order was in this school. And I could only last there a year because I was too different on how I would treat students.

[00:12:00.01] INTERVIEWER: Were there Sisters that you remember from your high school that you want to share--a particularly supportive Sister, or inspirational Sister to you?

[00:12:08.17] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: The seniors--Sister Eugene was her name--Sister Mary Eugene [??]. And in my class I think she helped four of us enter in the end. And I think she--one of the things that she did was she sought me out when I got in trouble in the school, and I didn't tell my--I was sent home even, and my mother was at work of course so she did not know I even had come home. So I couldn't figure out how I was going to go to school on Monday, when I wasn't allowed back. [laughs]. And she called and

told me how to go about it, and what I needed to do, and all. And it was--so it was a relationship of understanding and making that phone call to me and figuring it--. But she was that way with everyone. She was just very down-to-earth, very friendly, very open to anything you did, but would call you on it too, but in a nice way.

[00:13:07.08] INTERVIEWER: Sounds like she had--like, a longer goal in mind for--you know, this is not just about this moment of punishment but your future.

[00:13:14.15] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: That's right. Yes, I think so.

[00:13:16.21] INTERVIEWER: Can we ask what you did to get in trouble?

[00:13:21.25] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Well I had done two things in a row. [laughs]. One was in a classroom--everyone was kind of disorderly, and the teacher--well, the person that was teaching was not a real teacher, I can say that looking back. And so people had things on their desk, and--doing homework. And I didn't happen to be doing my homework but I had stuff on my desk. And she came around and ripped up everyone's work, and it was the work I needed for that day. And there was a tuition bill there too. So I said, "Did you want to take this too?" And I ripped it up--which was not very nice. [laughs]. But anyhow. So I got reported. And then I had done something in our assembly that same day, and--the person that was on the stage was asking for clothes and shoes for the poor. And she was a good friend. So I shouldn't have really--I mean, so I took off my shoes--there were three of us that--we passed our shoes up. [laughs]. And so the Principal wasn't there but we were reported to the Principal. And so we had--so I did get my punishments--I apologized to--in front of the whole class for what I had done, and I was never allowed to sit in the first three rows of an assembly through the rest of high school. But--[laughs]. They were silly little things, but they were not nice.

[00:14:55.01] INTERVIEWER: So then did you enter right out of high school?

[00:14:57.22] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: I did. I did.

[00:14:59.06] INTERVIEWER: How did your parents--your family feel about you entering religious life?

[00:15:03.06] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Well, they did not like it. My brother had gone into the junior seminary--he was two years younger than me so he had been in for two years. And in the Irish families, you know, the priest is everything, and so they were happy he was there--it was great. But the--their impression of a Sister was not good, and my dad--he had a sister who had gone in the convent in Ireland. And she was a nurse and then became head of hospitals, but she was always--she was sent from Ireland to France and never returned. And my mother had some cousins that were sent to Australia and never returned. So their impressions weren't great. And my mother said, "As soon as they have you on the floor, scrubbing those floors, you'll want to come home. You just wait and see." But they thought I was going to my death, both--you know, they both felt that way very strongly, whereas for my brother it was a different thing. But that was the Irish culture.

[00:16:07.10] INTERVIEWER: So how did that play out as you entered and went to the novitiate in terms of your relationship with them?

[00:16:13.27] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: They visited and were fine, you know, but my sisters didn't take to it a lot--and I think you come to that later about habit. But the habit just shut them down--totally. So it was an interesting thing.

[00:16:32.12] INTERVIEWER: What was it like for you in the novitiate? Did anything surprise you or was particularly challenging for you in your early postulant years?

[00:16:40.23] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: No. I think the biggest thing--the challenge was that my family couldn't get to see me. You know--and you had the once a month visiting, and if it--but they couldn't always afford to come down, and then you would be down for two hours. It was--for a working family that was not good. And in those days you also--you know, you didn't go home. So it was a--so that was a challenge.

There were rules and things that were challenges, but I think the saving thing in our group--and I think in probably a lot of the groups--was--we took it out there but it never got here [points to chest]. And so--

[00:17:22.12] INTERVIEWER: What do you mean by that?

[00:17:25.16] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: [laughs]. I mean, there were rules out there, and so, you know--the people that took it so strictly really left when Vatican II came. It was--but ours was--"oh it's okay" or it's a--it wasn't a joke, but we were in it together and it wasn't the way I was raised on some of these kinds of things, and so they didn't get to me inside, that I could see it in the--but I could get around it too in some way. And then I didn't have a hard time in the novitiate--I think because of some of that. And I was given leadership roles in the novitiate too, so--or even to moving here--that I got to--I came up to move the whole dining room and spent the night out in the field. You know, and the roof--and it's stuff that people didn't ever get out, or I would be the one to accompany people to the doctors or the dentist or whatever that--. So I think that was being the oldest child in my family probably brought me into that. [all laugh].

[00:18:32.14] INTERVIEWER: That's what I was thinking too.

[00:18:33.10] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Yeah. [all laugh].

[00:18:36.16] INTERVIEWER: What do you remember fondly about those years?

[00:18:38.22] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: I think I remember the spirit of the group itself, that--you know, was part of our reception that we really stayed together and stuck up for each other and supported each other and--whatever happened. So I remember that very strongly and how we did that.

[00:19:01.03] INTERVIEWER: Who were some of the Sisters in your reception?

[00:19:03.18] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Sister Mary Sevilla ['63] is one. Sister Judy Lovchik [(-1981)] that died--we were very close. Sister Noreen O'Connor--I don't think you know her either. Sister Pat McCarthy. Sister Antoinette Czuleger ['63]. [unintelligible].

[00:19:22.29] INTERVIEWER: And how did you feel about taking the habit? What was that experience like for you when you received it?

[00:19:31.05] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Well, all I remember--[laughs]--is the person--you had--someone was assigned to dress you, or you could choose. And so this Sister Valeria [??] is the one who dressed me. And she had been my brother's teacher somehow, so she had connected, and so she was here. And I had long curly hair. And so when you were sent from the chapel up to put the habit on, she was supposed to cut your hair and dress you. Well she didn't want to do that. [laughs]. So she just cut a little bit and kept talking, and dressed me with this whole thing on. And so when we came down afterwards, I had a cousin who I was close to and she was a few years older than me. She said, "You look terrible. Let's go someplace and see if I can dress you right." And she had no idea how to put it on me, and I had no idea--so she did dress me and I got rid of the headache I had--but that was it. But I was happy and--but the habit--I always had headaches from the habit. You had a little cap on it--I think I have too many cowlicks and so my hair would go the wrong way or whatever. [smiles]. But it was happy and I reverence it. And I was a good seamstress so I made a lot of the people's habits on their own, because everyone was supposed to make their own, but we would do a little cheating. [all laugh].

[00:21:02.05] INTERVIEWER: When you--in your reception and then into your first profession, did you have hopes and dreams for what you wanted to do or be as a Sister? What you hoped to accomplish?

[00:21:14.13] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: I wanted to teach, but I also wanted to do for other people at the same time. And always through my career, and all my ministries, I always did some other outside stuff as well. It was never--just like in school I did volunteer work along with it. But it was that broader picture and a sensitivity to people. And my first school I taught was St. Vincent's, which were very poor children. And at that time there were a lot of children that had come from Cuba as well, and we had a lot of children--so didn't speak English or ones that--just poverty was very strong. And the giving to them and receiving from

them was very strong, very loving. And so I was there four years and that was a real big piece in shaping me in walking in the footsteps of families.

[00:22:12.03] INTERVIEWER: And then you--so most of your early ministry--a good chunk of it was elementary school teaching?

[00:22:17.29] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Yes. So from there I went to a very rich school. [smiles]. So it was--I had a contrast experience. And so I went from working with very poor to very rich, and it was--and that was hard. And it was hard because the parents--well by that time we're into parents on drugs and relationships where--swapping of husbands and wives--and all of that carried over into the kids. "Oh, my maid made this for lunch I don't want it!"--or whatever. Or families saying--the Principal even saying, "Don't put up any holy pictures in your room" or in the classrooms for open house--that it was--what the people want was best education. And so it was very hard in dealing with that contrast--taking everything for granted and someone who didn't have anything. So it was a--

[00:23:19.12] INTERVIEWER: Yeah. And this is in the--so you're talking about in the early '60s, when the sexual revolution, Vietnam had started--

[00:23:23.22] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Yes. Right, exactly. So from there I went into the Vietnam piece. [all laugh]. But there it was just more of that kind of thing and talking to parents about their kids starting drugs and--"Well, I do drugs. I don't see why they can't." I mean it was just--taken for granted with elementary school kids, some of these things. So it was hard.

[00:23:45.20] INTERVIEWER: Were you finding that time particularly shocking, or do you have a sense of your experience of what was going on in the world? Is--you're a person in religious life and yet it seems your family experience exposes you to more of a broad experience in a way.

[00:24:03.18] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Right. And I did. And remember my family was Haight-Ashbury. So when I would go home it would be that way. And my mother opened her restaurant to people from the Haight and all for dinner meal, because she did breakfast and lunches, and so she would serve poor at the--. So you would go home--you'd be part of it and they were always entering into that kind of a thing. And so--so it was--it wasn't shocking, it was more how to deal with it, and it was foreign in how to deal with it, and that was the part that for me was very hard.

[00:24:37.00] INTERVIEWER: So--and then you come back to Southern California for--it looks like just one year at St. Joseph's--

[00:24:43.00] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Yes. Well what had happened--I had cancer in the meantime. So I had--and reconstruction--I had colon cancer. And so it was unusual that I would even live at the time. And so I went to St. Joseph's during my recoup year--[laughs]--and opened their Home Ec[onomics] department. And it was a new school, so we were opening the school. And from there--they felt because I had had a second surgery that I should be closer to my family. And so I went north and then opened the Home Ec department and Religion department up there instead. So it's a--and stayed there a long time. [smiles].

[00:25:26.16] INTERVIEWER: Did you study Home Ec at the Mount? Is that--

[00:25:28.19] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: I did. Well I started with English, History--a group major in Education, and then they put me into Language because--I had my schedule filled with Language in high school because I was also not allowed to have a free period. [laughs]. So that's what I would take. But I knew I never could talk it, and so--I could read it and write it and understand the words, but I hadn't been taught that. So I backed out of the language piece. And then somehow because someone knew I knew how to sew they thought I should go in Home Ec, and I never had a sewing class--even in Home Ec. When I was sick that summer I taught myself tailoring--got my points in that. But it was a million and one units, so I had a Home Ec major then too. So I had the group--the double--because I think I had like a hundred and forty points in Home Ec.

[00:26:25.09] INTERVIEWER: I've been curious you know, about the Home Ec department at the Mount.

And a number of Sisters like "Ceese" [Sister Cecile Therese Beresford] was in Home Ec. And of course now that seems so anachronistic. So could you shed a little light on what that department was about and your reflections on that now?

[00:26:45.21] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Well, the department was small. The--I think there was only--before her, before "Ceese" took over up there I think Sister Marguerite [Sister Mary Marguerite Ellard]--I think that was her name--I never had her. She was the one that taught it and opened the department. And their department--they--this is me thinking afterwards, after I went to San Jose State and saw the difference--that I think it was fighting to show it was equal academically to other departments. And so that's why it had so many courses--and Economics courses--and you know, things that you never used later in child care. But it was good--it was grounded--Nutrition classes--I practically have a degree in Nutrition from the number of Nutrition classes. So--but I never had a cooking class [laughs]. So it's like--but it was making you grounded in the whole big field, and I think--I know it was very useful to me in working with students--that they knew--they could relax around you. I taught--I did mostly the cooking and Nutrition and Child Development, and Clothing classes, and I did a little of the Housing with them. But the students would treat you as equal--but I taught more Religion in Home Ec classes than I ever taught any place else. Because you would--people would bring out all their problems or questions they had, and it was a very good thing. It's an area people don't have today. I mean, when I left that department, when I--one of the first thing I would have students come in and okay, if you go set a table. By the end, people had no idea how to set a table. In the class only one person ever ate dinner together as a family, it was always in front of the TV or TV dinners. And it was a change in society which had continued, and--continued in a breakdown of a lot of that family life or tradition and security that was offered to kids.

[00:29:04.21] INTERVIEWER: Thank you for that. So let's start to talk a little bit about Vatican II, because that's starting to happen around that time. What do you remember from when Vatican II starts to kind of unfold and how it impacts you personally, and the community?

[00:29:21.16] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Well Vatican II--one of the first Church teachings I remember was--Church is the people of God. And that was--so I became part of a parish group immediately, studying what that meant and talking about it and becoming Church in a different way. And that's when I was at Carondelet High School. And Carondelet High School--we opened it, and then after three years it became an experimental school. And in that, Sister Kathleen Kelly became the first Principal--Sister Edward Mary [Zerwekh?] had been the Principal before in the regular. But it was that we all came together. Before that you were always missioned and now you were going back to your roots and you were also trying to divide the city and look at people in a different way. And so Sister Kathleen had written up a philosophy of teaching or whatever she believed in, and then people had to say they wanted to go there and then she also had to accept. I was already there, but I--. And I believed in it, and so it was giving choice and also that choice was also what influencing us in community at the same time. And so teaching became something where you tried to empower students. And as I look back at our own charism, and at that time that's what you were starting to do, that's what we did. We empowered people. And so it was giving that choice and empowering and they would choose what classes they wanted. They would choose if we had a liturgy or some kind of event going on, whether they wanted to go to it or not. People would help evaluate. And other lay teachers who came on at the same time had to agree. And we all agreed to three years--that we would be there and work together as community--as faculty--and try to bring students to that same--. So it was an exciting piece in that line. And I think for me the Vatican II piece opened them to start looking at other ministries. And so at that stage I went to Seattle University, to--which Religious Ed. And in that masters program it was equal units in Scripture and Religious Ed, with Psychology. Because the person who started the program believed that the message is there--the message of Jesus or scripture is always there--it's the messenger who gets in the way. And so you took courses on how you as messenger break things down, or how you affect people and all. At that stage it was a mix of all different religious communities that were there. And some were searching for where they were going to be next or doing, but we used the Vatican II teachings at that time. And the teachers we had at that time were very up-to-date on Vatican II too, so it was a--it was an important piece in making the Church alive and breaking down some of the stereotypes and also it was a Church I loved. It was--the Church I wanted before--[laughs]--and didn't know that we didn't have, you know. So it was very good.

[00:32:54.13] INTERVIEWER: Is there a--since you were studying at that time--I'm curious if there's a

school of thought, a theologian, a concept, a scripture that really became foundational for your or really broke open for you, or that you embraced?

[00:33:09.17] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Now I think it was more Incarnational Theology. And so it was seeing--very much seeing Jesus as a person and relating to people that God was as much present in people as--. Often I can remember--my brother was in the year before me--he was in the first class of it. And he's the one that encouraged me that you're going to--you should try this--you'd really like it. And it was when I was still sick, I was, you know, recovering and so he said--and he says, "I think it's more what you are, what you like"--because he used to always be, "Why are they so strict with you?" or whatever. And I said, "They're not." It's like--but anyhow, in that, his thing was always you know that--so we often will say, "Oh, the sunset moves me" or "This piece of beauty". And he says, "Yeah, those were God's first creations but persons--look at that creation. And Jesus became one." And Incarnational Theology did that and it's--so it's realizing the presence of God in people, and how you treat people and that's where the whole justice thing opened up wide. So--.

[00:34:25.24] INTERVIEWER: And then to me that speaks to the charism. So can you talk--can you connect that to--kind of rediscovering or--

[00:34:32.06] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Yes. And so then as we studied--as I looked at charism was that whole relation of people of neighbor to neighbor--of finding God in the other person, or bringing the God out that's there already. It's not God is up there [looks up]--but God is there but he's here. And so it's how do I take the opportunities of finding God in the other person. And so it's that respect for the dignity of people, and empowering people to bring out their gifts. And all that I think is part of the first Sisters and they divide the city and the women--the prostitutes--they were not condemning prostitution, they were empowering people to make a living and to be themselves and to use their gifts. And I think that was a big piece. And they also--in the early history as you get--they risk speaking up against authority. Even in the risking of going from a cloister to a community out there and taking whatever guff happened because of it. That was all a piece of it. And so risk became part of also how I lived.

[00:35:45.07] INTERVIEWER: Wow. That's great. And so we didn't talk about this--but I'm assuming--I shouldn't assume. The habit for you--you were okay with--

[00:35:52.24] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Was okay but see I started changing--I was in Home Ec. So when we started looking at habit I was one of the five that we were supposed to come up with conglomerations. Because we went through an experiment piece of everyone wore different. And I looked like the 1912 or--[laughs]--those women you see with that thing on their head--it was a grey outfit. It was a--horrible, but I do have a funny story that goes with that, because we had to--you were only given the one. And I was convinced by then that we needed to change because, as I said, it was the Haight-Ashbury years--it was the Vietnam War. I was involved in Berkeley. And I can remember going down Haight street one day and people spitting at me--spitting with the habit. And I experienced similar in Oakland--being cut off. And I experienced it with my own sisters in feeling a barrier. And so I thought it wasn't--our welcoming or relational piece--there was something wrong in that. It was a witness value in someone recognizing you as a Sisters, but in being able to close those gaps it wasn't always true. But this time I'm in that classroom--no--yes, I was in the classroom and teaching food, and some stain had gotten on this outfit. And so I called down here to the person in charge of this whole thing and said, "Can I go make another--buy it?" She says, "No. Take butter and rub it on." Well, butter on grease--of course it got worse. So the Principal said, "You can't go to school--you can't wear that." And I said, "I know, but I was told I had to. We can't get another one." So she said, "What kind of material is it?" I said, "Trigger". And she says, "I'll go find some." So she went out and bought the material--I said what I needed--she bought the material. And that day I was teaching all sewing classes. Now at that group--those sewing classes that day were first level. [laughs]. I would pass the piece of the outfit and they would--this class would sew this piece, and the next would sew the next. [By] the end of the day I had the outfit. [all laugh]. All made by freshmen. But anyhow--but I did wear that until we changed out of it. But it was a difference. I mean the habit is something I respect, and stood for something, and was holy--but--and important in the early days--but as times had changed it became a barrier. And so from that end--but it's still something I respect. And I also am grateful that it didn't become a sore point for us in our chapters--that what we wore wasn't the important thing--it was what we did. And so you'll still find some Sisters in it and some people who just wore veils. But it was something we never discussed--we never

complained about.

[00:39:07.19] INTERVIEWER: Thank you. Okay, so how do you make this transition then from Education--it looks like you're--well you're continually involved in Education--but when does the kind of social justice and the different issues start to--

[00:39:21.08] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Okay. Well it started with high school because I brought the-- Vietnam was a big one. And to--I guess one day I walked in--I was part of the Religion department--I walked in the auditorium. And it must have been at lunch break. And the kids were all in there with the lights off and candles and praying. It was--you know--and so their impression of what was going on, and moving with them--it became part of me. And there were three of us I guess who--really we marched. And we did things. But I remember our charism piece coming in. We went to Berkeley to a Newman Center meeting. And it was supposed to be on Gandhi, but when we walked in the discussion was, "Shall we bomb the ROTC or not?"--shall we bomb "rotsy". And I'm thinking, "What's 'rotsy'? And it was--I knew it was the wrong group--that we weren't into the bombing part--we were into ending war. And so I became part of a World Without War, and did education on peace and how to become a peace giver--and taught that in classes and put in a couple of Peace classes and moved that way. And then there was a program for people getting out of prison and how to adjust. And it was for men. And there were three of us. In the house I lived--that's Carondelet High School--was--we were like eighteen, and we were all people who had come from that same kind of philosophy of helping each other and doing whatever. And there were five of us who decided that we wanted to be part of this program--this Man-to-Man program that was started to help people in prison and adjust outside. Well we had changed habit by then, and we didn't realize we were the only women invited in, because they thought we were still in the habit and so you'd be non-sex, right? [smiles]. And so we did go in, and we did stay with the program, and would write to them, and it was--seeing a lot of the prison injustices. But also a lesson I learned was, in people that were in solitary confinement--there was a stage where they were all in lockdown for like two months. And my person in particular wrote poetry that was very bitter and angry and someone else's person was reading books and trying to get an education and all that. And it was--it taught me that it's not the situation, it's what you do with it that makes a difference in who you are and how you are. And so that became important for me, and how--the atmosphere and what I provided to people. And at that same time Delano [Delano Grape Strike and Boycott (1965-1970)] came along. So this is all while I'm still teaching. And so in our house there were several of us that would boycott grapes, but we also went every weekend to Delano [California], and would help prepare pamphlets, and then some of the Sisters--one went and started the clinic and one went and did child care, and one went in the office--so it would be supporting them and going weekly and just working to help people. So that's how I began.

[00:42:49.25] INTERVIEWER: So just for the sake of history, would you say a little bit about what "Delano" was?

[00:42:54.14] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Oh yes. Delano was by--Cesar Chavez [1927-1993, American labor leader and civil rights activist] had his headquarters in Delano. And it was--he himself had been a farm worker at one time--but was to change the work of the farm worker so it was a work with dignity, and where they were paid just wages. Well they never really were paid just wages, but it was at least to raise the dignity and get some of the pesticides off the farms, and to put in bathrooms, and that type of thing. And so what he tried to do was to organize the farm workers into unions, because they would often work in the fields and not receive any pay, and there was no way they could do anything about it. So that was the work of the farm worker. And then I was very lucky when he died that Sister Louise Bernstein and I went up to the funeral, and we marched those three hours to the tent where it was going to be in the heat of the day, and the dusty roads. And I was marching with a Protestant minister that I'd known from Oakland area that worked there, and another kind of St. Joseph nun that was there, and a Catholic priest in front that I knew. And when we got up to the place the people were outside mostly. And inside the tent were most of the priests and stuff. And so I'm separating because they're supposed to go, and the Protestant minister handed me a stole, and said, "Put this on. You're as much a part of this as we are. Your order did more work here than we--most of us did." And so then I was led around the back with them, and as the priests were going in, this guy--he's a minister and he has his color [gestures to neck]--he says, "She's with us. She's one of ours." And so walk in and I sat with the priest and ministers, and Cesar's family, and the Kennedy's [Ethel Kennedy, widow of Sen. Robert Kennedy, and their two sons, Joe and Robert, Jr.] and all right there. And

then when it came time for Communion I thought, "How am I going to do this?"--because the archbishop was on the altar and he knew me. And so the priests all said, "Come on out with us", and I go up with them. And one of the priests when he's given the wine to bring and pass out among the people, he hands it to me, and sends me down. And the others all blocked me--[laughs]--and I went down and gave Communion. It was a--to the people that we had worked with. It was beautiful. And then when I went to go bring it up, it was how I was going to bring--a priest came down and took it from me so I could just quietly go back over to the side. But it was an honor to do something like that after someone who had worked and struggled--and I had worked the one year in Fresno, and seen the struggle of the farm worker kids, and what they were still going through at that stage.

[00:45:56.18] INTERVIEWER: How did that feel in that moment? What was that like for you?

[00:46:01.17] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: You know there was a sadness with an end of a Caesar, but--and a very moving thing with the people in being one with them and how they were feeling and how everyone was taking this. And when I--I walked directly behind the casket. And the casket was made by Caesar's brother. And it was just this plain piece of wood, and--you know and they would take turns carrying it those three hours. But it was just very much a unifying thing, and walking in their footsteps with them.

[00:46:44.04] INTERVIEWER: It looks like you spent some time in leadership as well, in the midst of some of this.

[00:46:49.08] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Yes.

[00:46:50.20] INTERVIEWER: So I'm sort of curious how--I mean--you have all these buttons from all of the various things you have been involved in, and all of these different issues--how did these things kind of continue to weave together for you?

[00:47:02.14] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: They just automatically did. I think that when I left Education and was fortunate enough in the religious education that I had, it wove it together for me. And then I had experiences with our own charism, because I was--after the religious education piece in Seattle, I was asked to be part of this thing with the Jesuits at USF [University of San Francisco?]. And it was someone from--it was like four of us, I guess, from each community the Jesuits ever had influenced in charism and we came together and discussed some of those parts. And right after that I went to one of our first Federation events which was in Kansas City [Missouri]. And in that, they didn't do a lot of talking. But what they did was say, "Okay you're all going to say it's Mars--we're on another planet"--and assigned us all to different groups. "Go figure out what you're going to do--what are your works?" And when we came together it was the discovering that all of us in some way were working with people, helping people, healing people, changing people, finding out the injustices on that place. It was like--it didn't matter what you did--we all did the same. And we were all different orders--I mean, of St. Joseph's. But it was--we're all the same. And so those were pieces that wove in for me. And so when I was in Leadership I also tried to encourage that among our Sisters. We were the second group of Regional Superiors. We hadn't had those. And so it was--[laughs]--you know, because we had moved into a whole group government type of thing. And so it was how to empower and bring out. And the area I had helped me with it. I was--all of L.A., the poor areas--I was mid-city, and so I had all the schools. And I had the biggest group--I had 120 people--and then I opened Carondelet Center-Holy Family too in that time. So--but it was--I would take one day a week to go into someone's ministry and work there--give that person the day off. So I worked in justice fields, because some worked in prisons, and some worked with [CEA (National Catholic Education Association)??] which--some worked in projects, Joseph Center--it was all different places. And so I kept walking in those footsteps of the poor, and it was very connected for me. So the justice piece became very much a part of me and the speaking out for justice and working for it. And--so I wouldn't consider myself an activist, but I would say that I will always talk out for justice and even--for my eighty-second birthday they wanted to know what I was going to do. And so--it was the day the DACA [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals] march was going on downtown, so I went and marched. And one of the other Sisters said, "I'll go with you", because she was going to cook dinner. So we went and marched for three hours. But it was like--to give a voice to the people--and it was--that was a very helpful event, because I've watched how it's changed. That they--there was nothing negative in the young people--all there was were their hopes and dreams--it really came through. And what their billboards, their signs, their chants--and usually you have a faction that's the other way--that was not

there. It was very much justice for them somehow to come through. And the need for it. So it's been part of me, and I think that's what I love about community--it's always supported that. Even in doing civil disobedience, or--and teaching people how to do non-violent civil disobedience, which I've done that. I've always been supported in community--larger community--and in smaller community that--. And it's like, we don't all have to do the same, but somehow we need to have the same belief. And so that's been very much a part. And it's that same belief goes to our charism.

[00:51:24.03] INTERVIEWER: So you've practiced civil disobedience?

[00:51:27.01] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Yes, I have.

[00:51:27.20] INTERVIEWER: Have you been arrested?

[00:51:28.24] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Yes.

[00:51:29.16] INTERVIEWER: Would you tell us a story or two about that?

[00:51:31.23] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Well one moving one--I think was--I would--well I guess it was--no--yeah, it was my second one in LA. I guess it was for--we--I first began to think about it was when the killing of the women in El Salvador [1980]--the four women and the Jesuits. And the Central America war kept going on. And in our house the community I lived in, we took in refugees--and--that would come and then they would be sent on to some place or whatever. And it would be people with nothing on their backs, and little kids, and the poverty in their country--but it was people who were being persecuted for their leadership and religion in their countries. So this was very dear to my heart, and I would only choose it--and that's still the case--when I've done everything else--when I've written the letters, I've talked to the people, I've protested, and there is no other way for your voice to be heard. And so in this particular one, there were--it was right after there had been one with Martin Sheen, as a matter of fact, in it. And some of them were disrespectful of the officers in it. And so afterwards I said, "I want to do some non-violent training of people who want to do this first." So in our community we did that, and we opened it to others, so that what you're doing you're not doing out of anger. And you also do it because you believe in something higher or more important. And you treat the people who arrest you or the people with you with respect--that they're not the problem. So in doing that--in this particular arrest we had done that, and we were in the holding center and--waiting to see what was going to happen next. And this one woman was a homeless woman that was in there. And when asked why she was there--because we would be sharing--she shared because all of a sudden she realized the reason she was homeless and didn't have any money was because all this money was going to these wars in Central America, and so she protested. It was--[smiles]--because it was something else was happening and she was being affected here just like they were being affected there. And it was a very moving one. And the other was--civil disobedience in--with the nuclear test site. I helped organize a couple of those that were religious men and women. But the Catholic Workers do a lot of the organizing on a regular basis. And one of the things is--they're treating with respect the workers too, because the workers aren't allowed to drive in--they come on busses--because they're not allowed to see the map or the site as they go. So we spent a whole day out in the desert praying for the workers. And then lined up to welcome them as they went through--with prayer, and with being with them. And then people who arrested you--you got arrested if you went across the cattleguard--and so we're all--many of them were Catholic, and were very open to you. And the funny story is--I think there were about twenty of us that had gone from here. And I had--we had a retreat first, and there and then went. And so--and it was all different religious communities. And so they--we were--in one of those pictures will show it--we're in an outside place with a fence around it, and the guards that are going to write you up on arrest are sitting in an air conditioned car. And so you go into this car, and you're--the guard is here with his air conditioning on, and the gun--rifle is lying next to him, and you sit here--[smiles]--and that's how you were arrested. But the piece is that when you were going to be arrested as--you didn't wait until you were called--we were all Sisters. And the priests were put in a separate--they separated the men and women. And the nuns all lined up--[smiles]--and I thought [covers face with hands], "Oh my God, no! That's not how you--" [laughs]. And so it was this line--we were used to orderliness and lining up, and so encouraging people to go back and sit on the floor--ground, against the wall, to get a little shade--because it was the middle of the day in the desert. But that was--but I think we gave--I know we gave witness to the guards as well in the non-violence and the respect and just so strongly saying how much we were against the nuclear destruction. And so--.

[00:56:36.13] INTERVIEWER: Did you spend significant time in jail?

[00:56:39.02] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: No, I never did--three hours. [all laugh]. When I went--and you know, some were fines and some I had to go before a judge. But it's a--but I got to give my piece and that's a--.

[00:56:52.08] INTERVIEWER: Would you just share maybe a few other kind of issues that you've been very active in and what's been, you know, a passion for you over the years?

[00:57:00.17] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Yeah. One of them--and I'm proud of our community--was debt relief. You know, poor countries that are burdened with debt--can't ever get their feet off the ground. And a lot of that is held by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and then countries. And so it was trying to get forgiveness of some of that debt. Our Sisters from Peru had begged us to do something, because as countries needed some of that there were restrictions put on them--so--such like privatizing their systems. Like the telephone system I think belongs to Japan, and different things like that that would take their money out of their country but also keep them being poor. And so we started this campaign--well it was on the international level is how I first found out. A lot of my work in the Justice Office was done more on the national and international--that by then I saw divide the city was divide the world. It was a bigger piece for me. And so I worked a lot on that. And so, in that group we worked first with countries that had the worst debt, and we would try--so we worked processes to try to get that debt forgiveness and--went to leadership pieces of the countries. And I went to Peru and I went to Nicaragua--all our justice coordinators from the Sisters of St. Joseph went, and we talked with the people, and talked with their governments that--an important part that we had learned was that the people need a say. And so it's not--so often what happens--of you say what--this is what the poor need. But the poor say what they need. And so that was our goal to do that. And we were very organized, and here we had letter writing. And I think it was like every two weeks we began--we started. So this time we're writing to Treasurer [Rubin??] and this time we're writing to someone in the State Department or someone in the World Bank. And so it was organized and the letters went through and we were acknowledged later as helping relieve the first three countries--and--that we did do that--we accomplished it, and worked together in it. And so it was a proud thing. And people were very consistent, especially on writing on issues they didn't know about. And you know you'd give them samples and you'd give some history each time--it was a lot of work--getting the materials. But Center of Concern and Mary Knoll in Washington would provide a lot of that, so that you had the info that you needed and could work with it. So that's one I was very proud of. And then another was the--getting the--now I'm even--the words going out of my mind--it's for people who don't make any money and they get money every month--

[01:00:19.02] KELBY THWAITS: Welfare System?

[01:00:19.05] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: It's like--it's a piece of Welfare but there's another word for what the money is they get. But it--what--a person is homeless or has no money, what they get to live on does not keep them in a shelter or a hotel or any--a motel a whole week. It only will keep them in four days. So you automatically are on the streets the other three. And so it was trying to organize so we could do something to make that change in LA. And one of the things we did was--and this was all of the justice coordinators too--working together we brought busloads of them to--down to the City Council meeting when this was going to happen. And with City Council if you're going to talk on the issue, you fill in a little piece of paper with your name and stuff, and then they collect it and call you. And so we had the room filled with homeless people. And of course to get them there you had to provide lunch--[laughs]--because that was a big piece. And so they were willing to speak of what was happening and why they couldn't make it or get off the streets. And what I discovered, which was a big thing for me, that when any of us spoke that were educated or we had some actors and actresses too--the "in and out" on Beverly Hills people--those people spoke--that the Council listened to us. And when a homeless person got up to talk people would--Council members would get up to talk to each other, go out for a cup of coffee--their voice was not heard. And it became--that's when learning to be the voice for so many people became important. And the whole thing in sanctuary--being that voice, because they couldn't be their own voices--that they're not listened to or seen worthwhile--so how to improve that. And I think in education that's an important piece of how to help people be their own voice and speak up for themselves and to empower them and to listen. So that's a piece of, I

think, how my charism has changed too--that listening and seeing who isn't being heard, and how do we bring that voice out?

[01:02:45.00] INTERVIEWER: What are some other issues that--maybe some that are--you're working on today? You mentioned DACA--

[01:02:50.21] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: DACA is my big--and now we're starting into the whole nuclear thing again, and war and non-violence and racism--those are all tied in. And through the whole racism thing I lived in the central part of where we had the riots--or uprising, we would say--and so we were in the dark with no electricity, nothing--and houses all around us on fire--

[01:03:22.29] INTERVIEWER: You talking about in the '90s? [Rodney King Riots in Los Angeles (1992)].

[01:03:25.16] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Yes. And so we--yes, yes it was--so we stayed up--we took our turns. It was the second riot--is that the '90s still? Yeah, I guess it is--end of the '90s. And so we took turns to--being up to see the house didn't get burned and we could get out of it. But it was afterwards, the last day--I said, "I can't stay in this house. We have to go out"--to go down two blocks and to see all the stores except McDonalds on this street burn down, and shoe stores, diaper places--just ashes, and people coming out to just sweep up and--. And now I live in Koreatown. And we had gone to Koreatown--in the afternoon I went home and said, "We gotta go march. I heard there's--in Koreatown there's something going." [March in Koreatown for merchants during Rodney King Riots (1992)]. And the Korean older people don't speak out and it was their young people who led it and it was in silence and tears that people just marched. But that issue became important in the whole racism and I went immediately to a Black church on that Sunday and--to being with people that were affected by racism and--which still continues today in so many ways. It's a--you know it may be--it's black--it can be any race, it doesn't matter. And I think I've seen that in other countries too. In the Hispanic I've seen it against the Black and the Black I've seen it against the Hispanic. It's like--it's everywhere--it's like, how do you break down that culture of racism and violence. And so--there's a peace pastoral that was put out many years ago. And one of the first things is, "Disarm your heart". And to me that's the most important part of the whole peace pastoral--how do I disarm the arms in me that wound and affect people, and don't treat people as equal somehow. So that's a big one too.

[01:05:30.06] INTERVIEWER: Yeah. I remember hearing you went down to the [Mexican-U.S.] border in the last year or two with some St. Joseph workers--

[01:05:35.12] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Yes. And I've been at the border several times--our borders yes. It was during the [2016 U.S. Presidential] campaign, and it was building the [proposed U.S.-Mexican border] wall, and it was like, to do something about the wall, and to speak out. And so we went to the wall in Nogales [Arizona]. And the young women went with us and it was an interesting thing for me--not interesting, tearing my heart--of listening to our young women--that two of them had undocumented parents, and didn't realize until they started hearing the stories of people--because we were on the border and they had a platform with some people on one side of the border and some on the other, but people spoke from the platform. And people that spoke about--there were persons that were in holding centers for two or three years, or people whose children, or people who had been sent back and hearing that. And so for these two girls--young women--what happened to them was the realization that they could lose their parents, and that they could be sent back. And in both cases they were the oldest child. And so, "How am I going to take care of my brothers and sisters? And this means I have to stop studies, too!" It was a sobering thing to them, and sobering to hear their realization of this and what that meant. And so--yes. And I've gone to our borders here, too. We've done prayer services there. And on ours the people on the other side prayed too. And to see on the hillside--it's--they're not the regular police, because they're very friendly on the ground. But it's whatever a group they are, they have the dogs, big dogs, and they're walking back and forth the whole time. It's a scary feeling--that you could be nabbed. Or when I took Mount students down--because when--I was in two years in Campus Ministry--that we went, and at night you could hear the helicopters coming down over people who might be doing--you know, crossing the border or whatever. It was very touching and very scary, but scary too thinking we're still doing that kind of thing, and so often treat people as animals. And I was part of the Maquiladora Study [American-owned factories abusing workers in cities on the U.S.-Mexican border] too, so it's like, going down with companies to research how they were abusing workers--our factories and groups down there, and being wined and dined, that you're

not supposed to notice. And to see the chemicals right there and people standing all day--you know those kinds of things--and not making any money. It's a--

[01:08:48.05] INTERVIEWER: So you've been witnessing this kind of injustice and speaking out against it for all these years. How do you keep hope and how do you support others in fostering hope?

[01:08:59.19] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Yeah. I think a moving thing for me in that was Henri Nouwen [Henri Jozef Machiel Nouwen (1932-1996), Dutch priest] was here one year, and I went to see--it was a peace group that was--. And it was at a church in Pasadena--Protestant church. And he was speaking there to all of these people that were there for peace. And a young man around twenty-two got up, and said, "I've been working all these years for peace, and nothing's happening. It's still the same way it was." And Henri Nouwen said to him, "Have you changed? Is there any change in you?" And he said, "Yeah, but--". And he [Nouwen] said, "No, that's it. That's the only way it's going to happen. It's how each of us has changed. Then the change starts happening." So I think that's for me--but I'm lucky that I am a hopeful person, and--just by nature--it's a gift in me--and so when something happens, it's a challenge to me. It doesn't put me down--the more I go out to meet it. And that's just my nature--you know, and I recognize it's my nature, and it's not everyone's nature, and so--. But it is that hope that things change. And I do a lot of gardening, and see death and life all the time in the yard in what grows and what doesn't grow, and how things change. And I've had cancer now, twice. I just am a survivor again. And so I see that life and death. And life is so important to me and so--then not complaining and appreciating--but again that's a gift. So it's important.

[01:10:44.28] KELBY THWAITS: I just need to jump in here just for one second. Because you were talking about your natural pre-disposition to hope--but you also have a natural defiant streak--

[01:10:56.24] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Yes. [all laugh].

[01:10:57.03] KELBY THWAITS: --which has accompanied you throughout your life. Could you share with us--what is it about that combination that has helped or hindered you--you know, that you've either fought with or that you've embraced or that has helped make you who you are? Because it's very obvious that that's a big part of what has helped you to be so--I think productive, and shake things up, you know--but then sometimes maybe rub someone the wrong way until they--until change happens. If you don't mind, just kind of elaborating that?

[01:11:35.12] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Well I think even in fighting the cancer that was it. My brother had cancer and he died of it--he had brain cancer. And he gave up as soon as he had--it was will of God and this is it. And I am, "No!" I will--you know, if it happens fine but I'm going to live the day and everything is important and the most I can do, whatever. So it's living on the hope side of it. But I think that's--it--I've tried to join organizations that try to work from the hope end too. And so I don't join or become part of groups that are out to get, or the anger, or just their--it doesn't work and--nor does it bring about change. But I think in me the challenge piece comes because I guess I have the hope that good can come from it or it can succeed--that I don't look from the negative side. But that's even my own thinking, and sometimes people will think maybe I'm negative or whatever--that I do critical thinking, and so when something's going on, I'm thinking along, "Oh, what about this in it?" or "How would that happen?". It's--so it's thinking of the next thing, or how can that be different, or how could we change that. So I see a lot of options--that's always part. It's never confined. But a piece that's funny in there is, one of the courses I had way back was "Counseling Through Dreams". And in the class you had to remember your dreams, which I would seldom do. And so the teacher had you remember a beautiful sight when you go to bed, like the ocean or whatever, and say, "In the morning I want to remember my dreams. I want to remember my dreams." So then you come in and you'd share and you'd do peer counseling. So I'd come in and I couldn't remember my dreams. And we did this a couple of times. So then--I think there were two of us left in the class that couldn't remember our dreams. Said, "Well, maybe you work from the opposite. Tonight when you go to bed and see the beautiful thing--I don't want to remember my dreams. I don't want to remember my dreams." And it worked. You remembered your dreams. And I think it--and so in my nature I think I go the opposite often and--don't know but I think my parents did too. It's like--it's a--you know they stood up for things they believed in. I remember my mother--they wanted to make her--she wasn't even a citizen yet--they wanted to make her the representative for the whole area, to go on city council or whatever, and it--because she was always organizing and doing for others. That's a--but it was part of it. And my sister protested the

building of the cathedral in San Francisco, my--everyone in the family has done--. But it's not that we were taught to do it, and it's not that I would ever do it to the detriment of others. Because I can remember in teaching there was a woman who was constantly wanting to go out, but she wasn't taking care of her kids and family. You know, and I just said, "No! They come first--you need--it has to be balanced." And so I think that's an important thing. But there's also a scripture piece of, "Shaking the dust off your feet and going on"--that I don't believe in convincing someone. It's letting people have the freedom to come to it. So presenting it or present it. And that's part of the education piece, and speaking around and trying to get where people are to see if they can hear it. But--so, if it doesn't work, it's--that's freedom of people to make that choice. So I think that's an important part. Is that kind of what you meant?

[01:15:45.18] KELBY THWAITS: Yes. That's exactly what I was hoping to hear. Thank you.

[01:15:50.04] INTERVIEWER: Do you have any spiritual practices, or is there anything about your spirituality that you'd be willing to share that kind of supports you or is a part of this--

[01:16:01.04] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Well, daily prayer for certain is. And it's always the beginning of my day. But I have always kept, also, a practice that we used to have--remembering the presence of God. And it was like, it would be every hour when the clock struck someone in the religious community would say, "Remember the presence of God"--you'd be a moment silent. I have kept that. I don't do it on the hour, but if I see a clock or every so often I'll think, and I'll just stop and think of where I am right now and what am I doing. And the other is, in our own prayer life as a local group, when we share the scripture we also share it in relation to our ministry or--how to be that day, or whatever. And so like, even today, it's like--today is a rush day for me all day. And so it's like, there are people hurting or there's a Sister out there that wants to be talked to, or whatever. It's how to balance that and take that in and so this other rush piece isn't--or the calendar isn't--as important as the people. And so I keep trying to remind myself always of that--that it's not the work, it's how I am at the work--and it's how I treat the people. And the other spiritual piece really comes from the economic pastoral of, "What are my decisions--or what do my actions--do to people and for people, and how do I allow people to participate?" And I think I see that in Jesus in--that relationship piece--that people could always come to him, and people never felt lower--but they always felt equal. And so I--those are important parts to me, and tie into my spirituality very much and into how I pray.

[01:18:05.09] INTERVIEWER: Could you think about our Mount Saint Mary's students who you did work with and still interact with I think from time to time? What--so if a Mount Saint Mary's student is thinking about how to maybe engage in the world and serve the dear neighbor and [unintelligible]--do you have any advice or encouragement or just anything you would share with our students?

[01:18:27.28] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Yeah. I think it's--wherever they feel moved. I think if a student feels moved or is pricked by conscience in some way, follow it. And to be willing to do it, and then find other people who feel the same way about it, so that you do move, you don't stand still. And another important piece I think is, don't stay closed in. Go out and find the person that is suffering, or is being left out, or is excluded in some way. So whoever that is or wherever it is, find that person and talk to them--get into the footsteps of the other person. So somehow reaching out besides the walls of the Mount that you reach out. And there are a lot of programs that do that. And--but it may even be reaching out to another student that's excluded in some way, and find out why and how to change things for that person. But it always begins with little things--it never begins with something big. And then to ask that question in the end--has it changed me in any way? So I'm not a do-gooder, or think I'm a savior, but it's like, how does that affect me and how have I changed somehow?

[01:19:52.14] INTERVIEWER: Thank you.

[01:19:53.12] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: And I think that even with--the first time that I heard the words, "Unstoppable"--I thought, "Oh, I don't like that word." And--because the word can be taken two ways, but I think, not unstoppable in the aggressive side of things or that my goal, I'm just going out there, but unstoppable for what I believe and stand for and how I can be empowered and how I can empower others--that's the unstoppable of the college--of the University. And I think that's what needs to keep going.

[01:20:29.02] INTERVIEWER: How do you feel about the future of the charism and the ministries in this time

of diminished vocations and the aging of the community? What--do you have hopes or disappointments about the future?

[01:20:42.15] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: I think if it's meant to be it's meant to be. And I think the charism is needed more today than it ever was. That the building of relationships, the healing, the wars, the racism, the degradation of people--it's something that's really needed, and so I think it continues. It continues in others, and you know I served on boards in our Northwest, in Washington and in Pasco--in Pasco, Washington and in Idaho. And in both of those they're "unchurched" areas, you would say that our Sisters have worked in and had hospitals. And on those boards, through the years, that charism has been picked up. And it's so alive in them without having a lot of Sisters. I think that there's two Sisters in each of those areas. And yet, if you talk about the boards or the way it is, it's very much alive. And you see that at Joseph Center, you see it at the different places we are, that it's alive. And so, how it's to continue, I don't know. I do think there will always probably be a small--maybe a small group of Sisters--but that's how we were in the beginning--that's the "unstoppable" piece--that's the piece--you don't have to be big. I mean, Jesus looked like he was a failure. [laughs]. Look at his disciples and look at the Church today. You know, so it's like, you're not looking at making numbers, it's in how you are, and how to be.

[01:22:24.19] INTERVIEWER: Thank you.

[01:22:25.28] [Director's comments].

[01:22:38.10] MARY TRUNK: If you could do an overview, very brief overview, of what it--the steps of entering--like as if you were telling someone that has no idea what that is--

[01:22:49.26] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: The steps of entering today? Or the steps that it was?

[01:22:52.13] MARY TRUNK: When you entered--and just--because I don't know what--forgive me for being naive, but I don't know what "novitiate" is or--or just even the steps--just outlining what they are. You don't have to go into it too deeply.

[01:23:04.25] SISTER ANNE MCMULLEN: Okay, so in the beginning, when you first decide you want to be a Sister you write--you wrote a letter asking, and you had a couple of letters of recommendation. And then you were accepted. And so then you had a year of what you called a "postulate", and today it's called a "candidacy". But it's a year of a postulate where you lived together, and you learned what community was, and you learned a little bit of what vows were, and you made a habit, and you took classes--you took college classes--so--because we were here, and so we did part of that. And then you were accepted into--for my time, I should say--it was only six months, now it's a year, two years often, for a candidacy. So then you went into the "novitiate". And at the--going into the novitiate you received the habit and you received a name. And your name at that time--you hand in like three choices, and receive one. And I got my mother and father, which was James Ann. And it was like you were taking on a new life. With Vatican II it was, no, you don't take on a new life--you go back to your baptism and the roots, and so you went back. But--so you had two years of novitiate. And then you went out and taught or went to a hospital or a few people went--continued studies. But the rest went into--before you finished having your degree. And then in summers you studied. And after five years you would make final vows if you were approved for it. But after three years, you renewed those--so you took vows for three and then at the end of that you took them for two more. And then you had a thirty day retreat to really consider is this what you wanted, and then you were a full-fledged member. So five--seven--eight years. Now it's about the same--it's two years of candidacy, where they live with a local community, and I've been fortunate enough that we've had three different candidates where they've lived and worked with--. And then they go into a novitiate for two years and then make vows and come out. Does that take care of it?

[01:25:31.15] INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much.

[01:25:33.07] End of interview.

Interview Index

Interview Date: 09/19/2017

Interviewee: Sister Anne McMullen

Interviewer: Shannon Green, Director, CSJ Institute, Mount Saint Mary's University; Sean Gary, Kelby Thwaits, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University; Mary Trunk, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University; Laura Townsend, Production Coordinator, CSJ Institute.

Location: Carondelet Center, Los Angeles, California.

Transcription Date: 10/03/2017

Transcribed By: Nancy Steinmann

[00:00:00.00] [Director's comments]

[00:00:18.14] Date, location participants.

[00:00:33.00] Full name and age: Sister Anne McMullen, 82 years old.

[00:00:44.00] Early life and family. Born Brooklyn, NY. Parents from Ireland. Parents' faith. Irish Republican Army (IRA). Moving to San Francisco, California for high school.

[00:02:11.04] Parents' influence. Visit to Ireland with mother. Father's IRA experience.

[00:03:33.25] Early religious experience. God not to be feared. Story of mother contradicting Sisters.

[00:05:00.06] Reflections on immigrant parents. Living in Irish ghetto in Brooklyn. Church reaction to African-Americans entering area; parents change to African-American church for events. Persistence of immigrant status and prejudice. Death of father.

[00:07:22.05] Move to San Francisco, California to live with uncle. Living in Haight-Ashbury district. Differences between San Francisco and New York. Attending Star of the Sea High School.

[00:08:59.15] Early contact with Sisters. Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood. Early vocation.

[00:10:40.07] Spirit of CSJs. Friendliness and equality between Sisters and others. Happy attitude.

[00:12:01.06] Influential Sisters in High School. Sister Mary Eugene [??]. Help when suspended from high school.

[00:14:55.15] Entering novitiate. Parents reaction to vocation. Preference for priests over nuns. Birth sisters reaction to habit.

[00:16:33.03] Novitiate experiences. Missing family. Reaction to rules. Leadership roles in novitiate. Spirit of reception group.

[00:19:01.18] Sisters in reception group: Sister Mary Sevilla '63. Sister Judy Lovchik (-1981). Sister Noreen O'Connor. Sister Pat McCarthy. Sister Antoinette Czuleger '63.

[00:19:22.22] Receiving the habit. Sister Valeria [??] helping her dress.

[00:21:02.28] Early missions. Hopes as a Sister-teaching and helping others. Teaching at St. Vincent's for 4 years. Contrast between wealthy and economically-challenged students and parents.

[00:23:19.11] Early 1960s--sexual revolution, Vietnam, drug use. Mother's restaurant serving poor in Haight-Ashbury.

[00:24:37.08] Teaching at St. Joseph's one year. Recovery from colon cancer. Opening Home Economics department. Moving back to San Francisco.

[00:25:26.01] Studying Home Economics at the Mount. Group major in Education, then Language, then Home Economics. Teaching self tailoring. Home Economics department at the Mount. Sister Marguerite [Ellard]. Usefulness of Home Economics when working with students. Teaching religion in Home Economics class. Social changes in eating habits.

[00:29:04.11] Vatican II. "Church is the people of God". Working at Carondelet High School. Sister Kathleen M. Kelly, principal. [Sister Edward Mary Zerwekh?]. Change to experimental school. Introduction of choice in community. Empowering students. Opening other ministries. Attending Seattle University for Religious Education/Psychology.

[00:32:54.23] Influential theologian, foundation or scripture: Incarnational Theology. Seeing Jesus as a person--presence of God in people.

[00:34:27.01] Charism. Finding God in other people--"dear neighbor". Empowering people. Early CSJ history. Challenging authority.

[00:35:46.22] Changes to habit. Experimental habits. People spitting at her for wearing habit. Story about stain on habit and new habit sewn by sewing class students. Habit as a barrier between people.

[00:39:07.00] Transition from Education to Social Justice work. Influence of Vietnam. Marches. Working with "World Without War"--education on peace. "Man to Man" program for men in prison. Effects of solitary confinement on prisoners. Working supporting Delano Grape Strike and Boycott (1965-1970).

[00:42:51.01] Description of Delano Grape Strike and Boycott (1965-1970). Cesar Chavez (1927-1993). Attending Cesar Chavez's funeral with Sister Louise Bernstein. Story about participating in Chavez funeral Mass.

[00:46:44.05] Working in leadership. Charism. Working with Jesuits at University of San Francisco. Attending Federation event in Kansas City, Missouri. Working as Regional Superior in Los Angeles. Opening Carondelet Center--Holy Family. Working for justice. Marching for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Positive nature of march. Community support for social justice including civil disobedience.

[00:51:24.25] Practicing civil disobedience. Being arrested. Killing of four women missionaries in El Salvador (1980). Wars and refugees in Central America. Civil disobedience after everything else is tried. Training others in non-violence. Story about being arrested with homeless woman. Protesting nuclear test sites--treating workers and guards with respect. Story about nuns lining up to be arrested at nuclear protest.

[00:56:52.05] Other social justice issues. Debt relief for countries--International Monetary Fund and World Bank--influence on keeping people poor. Working in Justice Center on international issues. Letting the poor say what they need. Working for Welfare recipients in Los Angeles. Bringing busloads of homeless to City Council meetings. Helping homeless find their own voice. Listening to the unheard.

[01:02:45.10] Current social justice issues. DACA. Nuclear power. War. Non-violence. Racism. Rodney King Riots in Los Angeles (1992). March in Koreatown for merchants during Rodney King Riots (1992). Attending African-American church. "Disarm your heart".

[01:05:30.14] Protesting Mexico border wall in Nogales, Arizona. Students with undocumented parents. Holding prayer services at California/Mexico border. Participating in Maquiladora Study--American-owned factories abusing workers on Mexican border.

[01:08:48.23] Keeping hope and supporting others while witnessing injustice. Henri Jozef Machiel Nouwen (1932-1996), Dutch priest--how each of us has changed working for peace. Death and change in gardens. Surviving cancer twice.

[01:10:46.04] Hope and defiance. Fighting cancer and not giving up. Working with organizations based on hope. Critical thinking, not negative. Story about Counseling Through Dreams class. Influence of parents and family. Justice without detriment of others.

Allowing people to make choice.

[01:15:50.21] Spirituality. Daily prayer. Remembering the presence of God every hour when clock strikes. Relating scripture to ministry. It's not the work, it's how I am at the work. Effect of decisions on others. Practicing equality.

[01:18:04.29] Advice to students on serving the dear neighbor. Work where you feel moved. Find others who feel the same way. Don't stay closed in--reach out to others. Ask how it has changed me. "Unstoppable" motto of MSMU--for others.

[01:20:29.07] Future of charism and ministries. Charism needed more today--continues in others. Charism alive even in "unchurched".

[01:22:24.25] Overview of steps of entering CSJs in past. Choosing religious name--"James Anne", names of parents. Difference between taking vows in present.

[01:25:30.13] End of interview.